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ABSTRACT

This research combines personal experience and a literature review to explore the issue of duality of social positioning of Australian ethnic minority girls. Caught between the minority cultural values and the larger culture's values of girls' education and multiculturalism, the dualism causes conflict within many minority girls. Of particular concern is the notion of identity and the role it can play in transforming curriculum beyond the 'either/or' dilemma. Feminist theorization of identity, particularly that concerned with race and ethnicity, is examined. The exploration of this concept has three elements: (1) whether particular understanding of identity have progressive possibilities; (2) whether subordinated groups of students themselves place a high premium on identity; and (3) whether curriculum, in order to address the needs of such groups of students, must address identity formation specifically. (EH)

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The feminist theorization of identity and difference and its potential for transformative curriculum

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Imagine Inge. A Turkish Cypriot sixteen year old. Her father and mother left Cyprus after the war to start a new life in Australia. They opened a restaurant in a busy inner-city area of Melbourne and worked night and day to establish themselves and their family. Inge and her sister were studious but were finding bridging the gap between their Cypriot and Australian education difficult, especially given the long hours they put in helping mum and dad in the restaurant. Moreover, Inge had a secret. Since leaving Cyprus she had been writing to her boyfriend who was left behind. After two years she decided to tell mum and dad and a trip back home was made to arrange the details of the wedding.

Imagine Inge's teachers. The inner-city school she attended prided itself on its progressive curriculum, a strong component of which was an equal opportunity programme for girls. The curriculum included, along with huge amounts of English as a Second Language (ESL), a unit in Herstory and girls-only outdoor education programmes and camps. In the context of the late seventies and early eighties this was heady stuff.

Imagine the reaction to Inge's wedding photographs and the fact that as a dowry the young couple had been presented with a new, completely furnished, brick house on the hill. The other students in the ESL class well understood and appreciated the white dress, good-looking groom and house. Many of the teachers on the other hand, could hardly comprehend what seemed to be a young life nipped in the bud. They were dismayed and angered by traditions and value-systems which were understood as almost feudal and certainly exceptionally patriarchal; a way of life they preferred stayed in the Cypriot village rather than be transported to Australia. The teachers, that is, who did not share a cultural background which made Inge's world somewhat familiar.

Imagine Inge's wedding from the viewpoint of those ESL teachers who were Greek, Lebanese, Serbian, in their late twenties and early thirties, who were women and who were acting as a conduit between their students and the wide world beyond the ESL portable classrooms clustered at the back of the school-yard, overlooking the neighbouring steelworks. For many of us, Inge's situation presented no black and white alternatives. Yes it was a tragedy that Inge did not have the opportunity, at this stage of her life, to explore a fuller range of options. But she did have a relationship she had chosen to enter, the security of an extended family network, a career and financial stability in an increasingly insecure economic climate. (The year after her wedding Inge and her husband opened their own restaurant.) Expressed in an alternative mind-set these same elements could combine into a fine set of progressive, even emancipatory, qualities. A young woman defying her parents to a enter a love-match of her own choosing, self-sufficient and successful in a non-traditional career.

Inge's story illustrates the social positioning of Australian ethnic minority girls; a positioning which places them between a range of educational discourses. Discourses concerned with girls education or multiculturalism are often considered the most relevant to this group of students and one of the aims within this paper is to explore the regulatory potential these have in relation to this group of students. In part, this is because these discourses reinforce rather than challenge the dualities which have characterized explorations of transformative curriculum. Theorizations of the role of

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schooling have moved with the pendulum swings between equality and difference; reproduction theories and resistance theories; understandings of power as repression and power as possibility. The social positioning of Australian ethnic minority girls provides valuable insights in to the limitations of such dualities. Their social positioning also provides some insights in to the issues it is important to address in order to make curriculum transformative.

Of particular concern here is the notion of identity and the role it can play in shifting understandings of transformative curriculum beyond the 'either/ors'. Here, feminist theorization of identity, particularly that concerned with race and ethnicity will be examined. The exploration being developed has three elements: firstly, whether particular understandings of identity have progressive possibilities; secondly, whether subordinated groups of students themselves place a high premium on identity; and thirdly, whether curriculum, in order to address the needs of such groups of students, must address identity formation specifically. Before going on to discuss these points, I would like to draw attention briefly, to some relevant Australian policy literature as a means of providing some context for this exploration. In particular I would like to discuss this policy literature in relation to ethnic minority girls so as to illustrate the point made earlier about their positioning between a range of educational discourses and the potential this provides for an analysis of the limitations of dualistic understandings of transformative curriculum.

Policy Related to Girls

In 1972 a national Labor government with a strong reformist agenda was elected. This government emphasised the role of education in social reform and established the Australian Schools Commission within weeks of coming into office. In relation to girls education specifically, the Schools Commission was responsible for the publication in 1975 of the report *Girls, School and Society* which set the directions for policy and practice in the area for many years to come. Because of its strong research base and arguments, the Report provided the rationale for subsequent gender equity programmes emphasising issues such as the links between subject selection and career choice, self-esteem, role modeling and the curriculum. *Girls, School and Society* established much of the ground work in the gender equity area which is now taken for granted (Yates, 1993).

The subsequent Commonwealth Schools Commission report concerned with girls education published in 1984, *Girls and Tomorrow*, reviewed progress in the area over the almost ten year gap which separated the two reports. The 1984 Report lacks the significance of *Girls, School and Society* in overall terms. However, it did initiate the idea of a national policy on girls education which came to fruition in 1987 with the publication, of *A National Policy on the Education of Girls in Australian Schools*. This policy had a relatively long lead-up time and was undertaken on the basis of a consultative process between the Commonwealth Government, states and territories, various education systems and communities. The importance of such a process is most evident in relation to the position adopted in the policy towards Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander peoples. The emphasis on consultation provided these communities with the opportunity to contribute on their terms and through their structures. As a result the education for Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander girls is discussed within a separate framework shaped by the importance of issues related to Land Rights and self-determination.

The national policy set in place a mechanism whereby the implementation of the priorities it established could be monitored. The results of this process have been published annually in a series of national reports (Commonwealth Schools Commission 1988, 1989, 1990). In 1993 the *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993-97* was published. Its stated aim was to add a new practical dimension

to the policy process. The focus is on providing those concerned with implementation with new priorities for action.

Policy Related to Ethnicity

Traditionally, policies dealing with ethnicity have fallen under the rubric of multiculturalism. There has been no multicultural policy equivalent to the Schools Commission reports dealing with gender discussed above. This in itself is noteworthy. Instead there has been a collection of tentative discussion papers designed to explore the concept and stimulate discussion[1] . Many of these have been shaped within the parameters of assumptions about culture clash. What support mechanisms do ethnic minority students need in place so that culture clash can be minimised and they can get on with the job of becoming happy little Australians? 'Australianness' has been understood solidly in mainstream terms and the emphasis has been on models seeking to compensate minorities for their 'unAustralianness'[2]. Within such policies debates have focussed on the relationship between pluralism and Australian identity with explorations of the core values identified with 'Australianness' into which all minorities need to be inducted.

Over the years an alternative multicultural policy orientation has also evolved which has sought to challenge mainstream conceptions of 'Australianness' and extend this to include non-deficit images of minority cultures[3]. Notions of biculturalism and bilingualism have been important elements in such conceptions. For example, in relation to language, there is an important shift in emphasis between the Teaching of English as a Second Language and bilingual approaches to the acquisition of English and mother-tongue maintenance. One approach can be centred on students' lack of English, while the other is an attempt to add something to what is already there, that is, mother-tongue competency or its potential. Moreover, there is an attempt to broaden the application of bilingualism to ethnic majority students. In this way, bilingualism is seen as valuable in its own right, as a means of extending the cultural experiences of the mainstream and as a way of affirming the backgrounds of minorities. Implicit in such an approach is a dynamic view of culture which understands the advantages in mainstream structures changing in order to accommodate minorities.

Increasingly, however, policy emphasis has shifted towards language, almost as a stand-alone issue. The Australian *National Policy on Languages* (1987) has been identified as making a stark differentiation between language teaching and learning and matters multicultural (Ozolins 1993). Its seems now, there is a consolidation of the movement towards embedding ethnic minority languages, which have had a strong association with the ethnic rights movement and progressive aspects of multiculturalism, into general notions of language teaching and learning. I have argued elsewhere that this shift has created a vacuum in the political space where hegemonic constructions of 'Australianness' can be contested (Tsolidis 1993).

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[1] See for example, Commonwealth Education Portfolio Group, *Commonwealth Education Portfolio Discussion Paper on Education in a Multicultural Australia*, Canberra, 1979 and NACCME, *Education in and for a Multicultural Society: Issues and Strategies for Policy Making*, Canberra, 1987.

[2] See for example, Committee on Multicultural Education, *Education for a Multicultural Society*, Report to the Schools Commission, Canberra, 1979.

[3] See for example, Ministry of Education, *Education In, And For, A Multicultural Victoria, Policy Guidelines For School Communities*, Ministry of Education, Victoria, 1986 and NACCME, *Education in and for a Multicultural Society: Issues and Strategies for Policy Making*, Canberra, 1987.

Ethnic minority girls - between educational discourses

Within the educational discourses described above, with one exception, ethnic minority girls remain invisible or are presented in a way which denies their agency. Most commonly, the issue of gender is used as an exemplar of the discordance between family and school values which schools must negotiate in a multicultural community[4]. In this regard, policies related to ethnic difference do not differ from policies concerned more specifically with gender[5]. At the school level, this discordance translates into a list of supposedly good things about Australian society which are presumed not to exist in minority cultures. Consequently there are explorations of priorities and strategies relevant in getting the families to do what schools consider need to be done. Getting Turkish girls to attend school camps, getting Greek boys to be less macho, getting ethnic minority parents to understand the value of sex education or camp programmes.

A common outcome of the way gender relations are understood to operate within minority cultures is the denial of agency to minority women. Most often, minority culture is constructed as if it were synonymous with the patriarchal thus denying the female and feminist traditions within minority cultures. Moreover, implicit in such constructions is an understanding of mainstream culture as relatively enlightened and able to offer ethnic minority women and girls a better deal than minority cultures.

In *Girls, School and Society* (1975) ethnic minority girls were marked out as a 'special needs' group, and discussed in a separate chapter rather than incorporated within the overall argumentation of the Report. The Report was specifically concerned with southern European ethnic minorities and was permeated with the hegemonic understandings related to the construction of gender within such cultures prevalent within Australian society. It argued that, within these communities, higher aspirations exist for children than exist in socio-economically comparable mainstream communities but that these aspirations do not extend to daughters. It took this as one reflection of the more traditional view of a woman's place in society which is believed to be held within such cultures. It argued that the discrepancy between the way gender is constructed within these cultures and the Australian mainstream creates a culture clash for southern European children, particularly adolescent girls.

On the other hand, while multicultural approaches have challenged deficit notions of minority cultures and have taken the onus for the negotiation of cultural difference away from the minorities, nonetheless, such policies have also been silent on the question of class and gender. Cultural difference is explored solely in relation to ethnicity as though this were a stand-alone issue. In this way, these policies avoid the hard questions related to the distribution of power, particularly that related to gender, within frameworks of difference (Tsolidis 1993).

I have already referred to the one exception in this range of policy discourses which does not fall into the pattern of denying ethnic minority girls their agency. The consultation process involved in the production of *The National Policy on the Education of Girls in Australian Schools* made a significant difference to the vision of Aboriginality embedded in such policy. It also produced a different emphasis than usual in relation to ethnic minority girls. The National Policy framed the discussion of

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4 This view is clearly illustrated by the Commonwealth Education Portfolio Group paper, *op cit.*.

5 See for example, Schools Commission, *Girls, School and Society; Report by a Study Group to the Schools Commission*, Canberra, 1975 and Consultative Council for Health and Human Relations Education, *Health and Human Relations Education in Schools*, Education Department of Victoria, undated.

these students in the context of the migration process and systemic racism. Relative to the previous School Commission reports on girls' education, this policy represents a significant shift in emphasis away from features intrinsic to the communities themselves and towards mainstream Australian society as a cause of the oppression experienced by ethnic minority girls. Within *Girls, School and Society*, the educational needs of ethnic minority girls were framed within a culture clash model, with the onus for change placed at the feet of minority communities rather than the schooling process. The National Policy on the other hand, made clear reference to features of the schooling process which adversely affect ethnic minority girls relative to other girls and relative to boys from their communities. In particular, the culture clash model was challenged and ethnic minority girls were constructed as active agents mediating between their communities and schools rather than passive victims caught between opposing forces.

On the whole, there has existed very little overlap between policies concerned with the education of girls and those concerned with ethnic status. On the contrary there persist strong common-sense understandings amongst Australian educationists that the two areas of gender and ethnicity are not only separate but incompatible. These understandings are surprising given what I would argue are the shared foundations on which anti-sexist and anti-racist curriculum can be built. The common-sense understandings of incompatibility can be attributed to what many feminist writers have described as the racism implicit in hierarchies of oppression as these relate to cross-cultural understandings of gender relations (Mama, 1984, Ng, 1991, Parmar, 1982, Pettman, 1992, Phoenix, 1990, Ramazanoglu, 1989, Huggins, 1991, Tsolidis 1984, 1986, 1990, hooks, 1981, 1984).

I would like to return to Inge to illustrate this point. For many, Inge's situation is symptomatic of a culturally specific form of patriarchy which is worse than patriarchy that is expressed in mainstream Australian society. Given this summation, it is an easy step to take to imagine Inge would be better off assimilating into the Australian way of doing things which, on the face of it, would offer her, as a young woman, more opportunities than the Turkish-Cypriot way of doing things. This is a step many take (Tsolidis 1986).

What is the basis of an understanding which has constructed Inge as oppressed and her young ethnic majority classmates less so? Inge shared a classroom with the type of mainstream student many teachers refer to affectionately as members of the duffle-coat and moccasin brigade. These girls are solidly working-class, often perceived as not particularly ambitious and not particularly interested in schooling. Often these young women are not experiencing much success at school, are in exploitative sexual relationships and have their horizons restricted by poverty, early motherhood and limited educational success. Nonetheless, there is a commonsense understanding that on some indices they are somehow better off than the likes of Inge. In part, this understanding is based on distinctions drawn between notions of individualistic free will relative to extended family obligations centred on notions of reputation and responsibility. In school-yard parlance these distinctions translate into the difference between being street-wise or over-protected. And they are expressed clearly in relation to ethnic status.

In the case of Inge, a sense of her obligations to her family to maintain an honourable reputation by marrying the boy and their responsibilities to her in the form of a dowry, encumber any analysis which may stress her free will at entering the relationship, her judgement about her educational potential and her business acumen. However, in the case of the street-wise sixteen year old, it is her free will and ability to fulfill her desires which are stressed rather than the social forces at work which make exploitative sexual relationships, for example, seem imperative (Thomas 1980). In the case of both girls, their agency functions within a context shaped by a vast range of factors including those related to ethnicity and class. This range of contextualizing

factors will afford each girl advantages and disadvantages. Yet in the case of the street-wise sixteen year old, the emphasis is on her capacity to fulfill her desires and not on the restrictions which frame her agency in ways which may lead to further constraints on choice. For Inge, on the other hand, the emphasis is on the restrictions and not on her agency. Both types of girls benefit very little from attempts to generalize the factors which shape such contexts or in prioritizing some factors over others and furthermore, implying heirarchies of worth between them.

Policy discourses concerned with girls education and multiculturalism can fulfill a regulatory function in relation to ethnic minority girls because such discourses do not account for specificity of experience. Most specifically, regardless of the fact that policy concerned with girls and that concerned with ethnicity deal with equality and difference respectively, both deny ethnic minority women and girls' agency instead of recognizing that this agency functions within specifically constituted parameters. Without this recognition, such educational discourses may in fact fulfill a regulatory function, not only in relation to students like Inge, but also in relation to other groups of students. This argument has been made in relation to whether concerns about 'students' in fact, includes concerns about girls (Yates, 1987)

Feminist theorizations of identity

Bordo in her recent book, *Unbearable Weight* (1993) sums up a growing concern with the tendency of postmodernism to become itself a regulating discourse. She describes '...the love-hate relationship that many of us who are trying to develop insights and perspectives out of marginalized experience have with the postmodern fragmentation of knowledge.' (Bordo, 1993:281) This has been a consistent theme in the work of feminists, particularly those concerned with marginalzed experience related to race and ethnicity. Often quoted in this context are the questions asked by Hartsock which so clearly delineate the dilemma:

> Why is it, exactly at the moment when so many of us who have been silenced begin to demand the right to name ourselves, to act as subjects rather than objects of history, that just then the concept of subjecthood becomes 'problematic'? Just when we are forming our own theories about the world, uncertainty emerges about whether the world can be adequately theorized? Just when we are talking about the changes we want, ideas of progress and possibility of 'meaningfully' organizing human society become suspect? (Hartsock, 87:196)

Bordo describes the relative confidence with which many feminists in a bygone era challenged notions of Truth and Reason on the basis of personal experience and threw themselves into the exercise of giving voice to those constituted in the margins. Yet, in an overall sense her argument is a plea for postmodernism and an attempt to make cynics see past its 'linguistic paraphernalia' and' pretentiousness' to the '...important insights and ideas that ought not to be dismissed out of annoyance with the elitism and insularity that are, after all, hardly new to academia' (Bordo 1993:279)

Her plea is somewhat reminiscent of the Christian television advertisements which try to make believing in Christ appeal to the young and iconoclastic. An exercise possibly doomed by its very nature. Similarly, does the very need to defend the radical potential of postmodernism define its entry into the ranks of the hegemonic? Bordo argues the imperatives of letting go of epistemological understandings which privilege experience and yet, within her writing there seems to be a sense of remorse and nostalgia at the loss of the bygone era when experience was unselfconsciously centred.

It is not surprising then, that in her attempts to reconcile the importance of postmodernism with this nostalgia for experience, Bordo nominates a book written by African-Amercian feminist bell hooks as critical to mapping postmodernism in this regard. Hooks in her book *Yearning: Race,. Gender and Cultural Politics* (1990) includes an essay titled 'Postmodern Blackness' which looks at reconciling postmodernism and notions of experience through an exploration of non-essentialized identity. (And whats more does so in language which is, as a matter of principle, accessible!) In her discussion, hooks makes the point that;

> When black folks critique essentialism, we are empowered to recognize multiple experiences of black identity that are the lived conditions which make diverse cultural productions possible. When this diversity is ignored, it is easy to see black folks as falling into two categories: nationalist or assimilationist, black-identified or white-identified. Coming to terms with the impact of postmodernism for black experience, particularly as it changes our sense of identity, means that we must and can rearticulate the basis for collective bonding. (hooks, 1990:29)

In this essay hooks argues a case for identity but also for this to be defined through multiple experiences. And in so doing, she makes the priority, a new articulation of collectivity.

Bordo and hooks speak to the types of questions which are so relevant to the transformative potential of schooling. By constituting themselves as empowerers aren't teachers defining their students as disempowered and confirming hegemonic understandings of power as a commodity to be transferred between students as passive recepients and teachers as active givers (Luke and Gore 1992) How do we reconcile issues of equality and difference without privileging the experiences of particular groups of students (Tsolidis 1993)? How do educationists reconcile the postmodern fragmentation of knowledge and an understanding of transformative curriculum as one which centres the experiences of subordinated groups of students?

Before going on to explore the progressive potential of a feminist understanding of identity as shifting and unessentialized in relation to schooling, I would like to discuss the ways in which identity formation is relevant to students themselves. I will do so most specifically in relation to Australian ethnic minority women and girls whose status as women, ethnic minority and often working class leads many to attribute to them notions of compounded disadvantage and a consequential eagerness to relinquish their subject location. This notion is particularly relevant to ethnic minority adolescent school girls because of the understanding of culture clash as already discussed in relation to policy.

Australian gender and ethnicity

While the construction of ethnicity in Australia has a limited commonality with the blackness and the racism hooks discusses, there is nonetheless some benefit in exploring her conception of identity as '...constituted in the experience of exile and struggle '(hooks 1990:29). The notion of exile, in particular, resonates strongly with the migration experience so much part of the character of Australia. With the exception of the indigenous peoples of Australia, the waves of immigrants have been identified as involuntary or voluntary exiles from other places. It is a metaphor embedded solidly in Australia's colonial past and in its present; from the British who hankered after England through to today's political and economic refugees who in various ways and for various reasons have a sense of the exile about them. The notion of exile assumes a sense of belonging somewhere else, yet for Australians there is no somewhere else where belonging is less ambivalent. It is the very stuff of migration to be Greek in Australia and Australian in Greece; to be constructed as ethnic majority in Australia and a colonial in England. It is this ambiguity of both belonging and not belonging which defines non-indigenous 'Australianness'. The boundaries which are drawn and not drawn around the concept of 'Australianness' illustrate most clearly the

understanding of identity as shifting '...based on its specific, emergent, and conflictual history.' (de Lauretis, 1990)

Increasingly, ethnicity in Australia is being understood to extend beyond the Greeks and Italians of the immediate post-war period of immigration. It embraces their children, their children's children, the so-called Asians, Arabs, people from Latin America, northern Africa, the Chinese dissidents, eastern Europeans, the Irish and the so-called British. Through the contestation of the boundaries which have been drawn around understandings of the 'migrant', the 'wog', the 'new Australian', the 'ethnic', the Aboriginal and the 'Australian', narrow hegemonic definitions of 'Australianness' are being debated and challenged. Because the construction of gender is inextricably linked with the drawing up and contesting of these boundaries, such definitions have as much to do with understandings of femininity and masculinity as they do with understandings of 'Australianness'.

Ahmed (1982), an Arabic feminist, makes the point that the racism she experienced in America stopped her identifying as a woman, and that up until her coming to America, she had not identified as an Arab, but on the contrary as a woman only. This notion of ethnic versus gender identification and the inextricable connections between understandings of gender, race and ethnicity resonates strongly with many Australian ethnic minority feminists for the dichotomy it establishes. However, for feminists caught in this binary there are two sets of essentialism which need to be challenged; those related to being a woman, and in the case of Ahmed, those related to being 'an Arab' or more generally being 'an ethnic'. In this way, there are two sets of politics to be negotiated; those centred on racism and those centred on patriarchy. It would seem that the best way to challenge such a double divide is to, in de Lauretis' terms, challenge the fixity of meaning implicit in polarities. This, she argues, would allow the development of a theory of the 'female-embodied subject that is based on its specific, emergent, and conflictual history.' (de Lauretis 1990)

The argument I would like to sketch here is that in relation to ethnic minority women in Australia, this fixity of meaning arises out of the type of duality which Ahmed alludes to; the type which forces either/or choices between gender and ethnic identifications. The fixity of this polarity is rarely challenged because ethnic minority women are most often invisible or constructed passively as victims. This denial of agency is particularly significant in relation to identity. Rather than the possibilities involved in the construction of bicultural identities, our identity is seen as something foisted on us by contesting others. For example, there are 'our' men who want us to remain 'ethnic', and there are 'the Australians' who want us to assimilate. And not uncommonly this contestation is linked to the enactment of gender relations so that being Australian is associated with notions of female emancipation. If instead we can understand bicultural identities as shifting, created in response to a range of issues, amongst which are oppressions based on racism, patriarchy and class, but also positive notions of what it means to be an ethnic minority woman, there is the potential to challenge the rigidity and fixity of meaning implicit in dualities.

This sense of creating bicultural identities is explored by Alcoff (1988) who makes reference to becoming Jewish-identified as a political act. And while this act of becoming is based on self-identification it is also necessitated by non-Jewish understandings of Jewishness. This self-construction of identity and the processes which precipitate it are familiar to many teachers. For example, the primary school student who all of a sudden realizes that having Ya Ya deliver a hot lunch to the school is unacceptable and fights for the right to have vegemite sandwiches. This often-referred to, food-based expression of culture clash is still somewhat profound for within it, the six year old is placed in the position of having to decide to expunge a central part of her comfort, identification, notion of self in favour of something which is at least unfamiliar and for many distasteful.

So often, food, language, music and dress become the mechanisms for contested and evolving self-imaging. And it is some of these which can become the focus of a 'doable' politics. Communities which fight for the right to have their languages taught in schools, West Indian girls in England who fight for the right to wear ethno-specific dress instead of the school uniform; ethnic minority girls who fight for the right to dress like their mainstream peers or socialize in similar ways; rather than trivial such issues become conduits for a politics of resistance against racism and sexism, as well as a politics for the creation of unassimilated identities. What needs to be framed is an understanding of such politics which situates them outside of the realms of reactionary pluralism and outside of the realms of an equity politics which does not engage in any meaningful way with difference. The last part of this paper will explore this notion in relation to transformative curriculum.

Transformative curriculum and identity

Ethnographies related to Australian schooling indicate that identity is an important issue for students. Also that gender, class and ethnic status are key elements in the creation of identities6. Once deficit frameworks are rejected and subordinated groups of students' agency recognized, their role in the construction of such identities can be acknowledged and addressed in curriculum terms. With specific reference to ethnic minority girls, there are indications that an alternative vision to that of the culture clash exists. There are indications that these girls actively cultivate their biculturalism and understand it in positive terms, to the extent of wishing to pass it on to their children. However, there are indications that the biculturalism which they create for themselves is also a critical reconfiguration of aspects of both mainstream and minority culture. Elements representative of a new generation and a new set of circumstances are added. Moreover, there are indications that this biculturalism contains strong challenges to sexism, racism and class oppression. (Tsolidis 1986, 1993).

While it is not possible to go into these issues in great detail here, it is important to note at a more general level that Australian ethnic minority girls, as with minority girls in other countries, question binaries which posit their home cultures as backward and mainstream culture as enlightened. Instead they are aware of racism, class oppression and sexism as these operate in mainstream society and sexism as it operates in minority cultures. Most importantly they are aware of the interrelationship between these factors. For example, in the case of ethnic minority girls in Australia, attention has been drawn to the role migration plays in redefining gender relations in ways which make life more restrictive for them than in their countries of origin. Ethnic minority girls are aware of the impact of migration with its resultant social and economic dislocation and vulnerability, the impact of this on their parents and consequently themselves. They are aware of their parents' loss of status and the implications of this within society generally and the family specifically (Tsolidis 1986,1993, MACMME 1987). Such issues are complex and defy simple dichotomies which stress the benefits of immigration without consideration of the disadvantages.

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6 See for example, Connell, R. W., Ashenden, D. J., Kessler, S. and Dowsett, G. W., *Making the Difference: Schools, Families an Social Division* , George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1982; Strinzos, M., 'To Be Greek Is To Be Good', in Johnson, L., and Tyler, D. (eds.) *Cultural Politics*, Melbourne Working Papers Series 5, Sociology Research Group in Cultural and Educational Studies, Melbourne University, Melbourne, 1984; Thomas, C., 'Girls and Counter-School Culture' in McCallum, D. and Ozolins, U. (eds), *Melbourne Working Papers*, University of Melbourne, 1980; Tsolidis 1986 *op cit*,; Walker, J., C., *Louts and Legends - Male Youth Culture in an Inner City School*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1988, Angus, L. 'Masculinity and Women Teachers at Christian Brothers College' in *Organizational Studies*, 14, 2, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin/New York, 1993.

If identity is understood, not as something imposed, but rather as something created in response to a set of circumstances, one of which is schooling, curriculum can be given a more creative set of responsibilities. Not only can curriculum help students identify and critically assess hegemonic images of what it means to be a Greek boy, Turkish girl or Australian girl, for example; but it can also assist such students recognise and work with elements available to them in a given context towards the creation of an identity which is comfortable and meaningful as well as counter-hegemonic. In this way, the emphasis is on both the creation of identity and the deconstruction of identity; on projecting voices as well as interrogating silences. This is more than revisiting standpoint epistemology or identity politics because it is premised on an understanding of identity as unessentialised and shifting; one which does not valorise one foothold on reality over another. Yet, such an understanding of identity is more than unbridled deconstruction because it presumes a subject location, that of the Other. In this way it is postfoundationalist but does not slide into endless relation (Laclau and Mouffe 1990, Yeatman 1991, hooks 1990).

In order for such an understanding of identity to be successfully integrated into curriculum, minority subject locations need to be understood in positive terms; as offering a cultural base on which a curriculum which can extend subordinated groups of students' experiences into those areas which give them access to the full range of life options can be built. Identity is understood not as something static and linked to birthright, but as something shifting and non-essentialised. An understanding of identity which presumes agency on the part of subordinated groups of students and their ability to construct themselves in various ways in response to a range of circumstances which include positive as well as negative elements.

Of utmost significance in relation to such an understanding of identity and a curriculum which can teach to it, is the interrelationship between gender, class, race/ethnicity. Curriculum frameworks need to challenge single-axis theories of oppression which create hierarchies of oppression rather than acknowledge the complex interdependencies between class, gender and race/ethnicity. Such frameworks are unlikely to limit or present as mutually exclusive elements students could otherwise manipulate towards identity formation.

Specifically in relation to ethnic minority girls, schooling needs to assist them recognise and challenge hegemonic images which explain their oppression as a product of factors intrinsic to their ethnic cultures as though these stand in isolation from systemic class oppression, sexism and racism. Schooling needs to recognise them as potential agents, both in opposition to their oppression and in the creation of bicultural identities. Ethnic minority girls need to become aware of the power implicit in their identity formation which draws on a unique range of elements, which if understood as positive instead of negative, bespeak a range of cultural possibilities. For example, instead of locked into the either/or of a brittle culture clash model which defines minority as patriarchal and majority as progressive and denies movement between them, they have the opportunity to move across a range of intersecting boundaries which attempt to delineate between youth, female, ethnic, class, national, feminist, marginal and mainstream cultures. And it is this movement across and within such boundaries which gives them experience of the community of anti-hegemonic political identities (Laclau and Mouffe 1990). Ethnic minority women and girls experience less immediate and complete coincidence with available anti-hegemonic political forces. Their interests are marginal within mainstream feminism and the ethnic rights movements, for example. However, this positioning also gives them the possibility of understanding and functioning within a range of political locations and building alliances between these. This is the positive potential which arises out of the interconnectedness of class, race/ethnicity and gender.

Conclusion

Instead of creating immutable binaries between the 'ethnic' and the 'Australian', the backward and the enlightened, the feminine and the masculine, curriculum can focus on an understanding of culture as dynamic. In such a context, having two languages, access to two sets of cultural understandings, knowledge of the margins and experience of a way of knowing which does not assume the centrality of one point of view can be understood as an advantage rather than a disadvantage. Both anti-sexist and anti-racist curriculum are built on such understandings and in this way rather than being incompatible have much in common. If identity is understood as political, shifting in response to particular social and historical contexts, dualistic constructions can be avoided. This is of paramount importance in relation to schooling where, in order for curriculum to have a transformative potential, it needs to be grounded in subordinate students' social reality, affirm aspects of their cultures, as well as extend their experiences and understandings in ways which challenge existing distributions of power.

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